

# The Moral Psychology of Gratitude

Edited by Robert Roberts and Daniel Telech

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# The Emotion-Virtue-Debt Triad of Gratitude: An Introduction to *The Moral Psychology of Gratitude*

Robert Roberts and Daniel Telech

Gratitude is a response to another's goodness. Paradigmatically, one is grateful *to* another *for* some benefit. That is, in feeling grateful, you typically construe yourself or someone you care about as a beneficiary and the other—the person to whom you are grateful—as a benefactor. But gratitude represents the benefactor as more than a supplier of benefits. It is a response not simply to beneficence but also to *benevolence*—goodwill. Natural events and malicious persons both may cause some end of mine to be fulfilled, and I may be glad *that* the beneficial state of affairs came to be, but such good fortune doesn't usually dispose me to feel grateful *to anyone*. This is plausibly because I do not take these benefits to be expressions of benevolence, or goodwill. The claim that gratitude construes another to have acted from goodwill is a mainstay in philosophical discussion of gratitude (e.g., Berger 1975: 299–300; Camenisch 1981; McConnell 1993; Roberts 2004). Gratitude is thus an interpersonal or social emotion.

We hasten to note a usage of the word “gratitude” that does not pick out an inherently interpersonal response; for example, “I am grateful *that* I got to see a shooting star.” This sense of gratitude, sometimes called “propositional gratitude” (McAleer 2012), involves a relation between a person and a state of affairs, without reference to a benefactor. But little seems to be lost by redescribing instances of so-called propositional gratitude as cases of *appreciation* (cf. Carr 2013; Roberts 2015; Manela 2016). Whether or not “propositional gratitude” is gratitude only in name, this volume is about the social and agent-directed emotion that involves a triadic relation between two agents and (typically) an action, as expressed by the following kind of sentence: “Abe is grateful to Miranda for helping him move into his new apartment.”

Gratitude has been studied in various aspects. It has been theorized not only as a positive emotion (alongside joy and admiration), but as both a virtue

and a grounding kind of *debt* or duty. This is not an exhaustive list, but the emotion-virtue-debt triad captures a core set of questions about gratitude, so we begin here. It might not be immediately transparent how the emotion-virtue-debt triad of gratitude hangs together. For, while the idea that gratitude is an emotion fits neatly with the idea that gratitude may also be a virtue (or a trait of excellence, whereby one is stably disposed to feel the emotion in the appropriate circumstances and to the appropriate degree), the emotion-debt dyad may be less intelligible. If one's debt of gratitude is a duty to be grateful, and being grateful amounts to feeling an emotion, then, given that one cannot directly will oneself to feel an emotion, debts of gratitude will seem to violate the "ought implies can" principle. To help render the emotion-virtue-debt triad intelligible, we discuss its elements in turn. Then we briefly summarize the volume's chapters.

## FEELING GRATEFUL: GRATITUDE QUA EMOTION

Gratitude is a pleasant emotion. To be grateful is to *take joy in* another's benevolently given benefit to oneself. That is, gratitude is a joyful attitude that represents another to have benefited oneself from goodwill.<sup>1</sup>

Morgan et al. (2014) say that some people, especially in the UK, find gratitude to be unpleasant because of the sense of indebtedness that it involves. Roberts (2016) speculates that such people may be mistaking the *situation* that calls for gratitude—a benefit has been gratuitously conferred—for gratitude itself, or supposing that any response to such a situation must be gratitude. Such people feel uncomfortable with being indebted, thus perhaps even resenting their benefactors for the benefits they have conferred. This is no doubt a common response; many people dislike feeling indebted and may not be clear about the special kind of indebtedness that goes with gratitude. Also, "benefactors" can be manipulative and domineering, and almost nobody likes being "indebted" to such people. Roberts (2016) argues that if this is what leads some to find "gratitude" unpleasant, the emotion they feel toward their benefactors is not properly called gratitude.

The exact propositional content definitive of gratitude is a matter of debate. In addition to representing another as having benefited one benevolently, it is sometimes held that gratitude represents the benefactor to have acted with the *intention* of benefiting one, and in a way that exceeds his duties toward the beneficiary (i.e., supererogatorily). Additionally, in feeling grateful, one presumably not only construes oneself as a beneficiary but also *welcomes the* benefit, and welcomes it as a benefit *from this benefactor*. What exactly it is to *be* a benefit is a large and important question in its own right (taken up in part by Macnamara, this volume), but it is worth mentioning that (1) the

benefactor's benefiting the beneficiary and (2) his benevolent attitudes are not always obviously separable. This is not only because one can be grateful to another for his benevolent *omission* but also because we are sometimes grateful for benevolent *attempts*, where there is no benefit to speak of apart from the kind or generous motivating attitudes of the benefactor. Though our welfare interests might not be promoted, we sometimes recognize that, as the saying has it, it's "the thought that counts." Indeed, Seneca, being a Stoic who thinks the only real goods are attitudes, thinks *only* the thought counts:

[a] benefit cannot be touched with one's hand; the business is carried out with one's mind. There is a big difference between the raw material of a benefit and the benefit itself. . . . Consequently, the benefit is not the gold, the silver, or any of the things which are thought to be most important; rather, the benefit is the intention of the giver. (*On Benefits*, 1.5.2)

Thus, on his view, "benevolent attitude" and "benefit" will share the same intension.<sup>2</sup>

As an emotion, gratitude can be considered either episodically or dispositionally. An *episode* of gratitude is the mental state experienced in joyfully thinking of oneself as benevolently benefited by another. One can count as being grateful, in the sense of having the emotion, however, even when one is not experiencing this joyful state. While being pulled over for speeding, Alex will not be joyful about much, but he can nevertheless be truly described as grateful to Ben for saving his life, assuming he is disposed to appreciate the action when reflecting on Ben's benevolent deed.

Alex's gratitude, however, will involve more than a disposition to *feel* positively about being benefited by another. To have the emotion of gratitude is also to be *motivated* to respond to one's benefactor in a way that shows him what the benefit means to one.<sup>3</sup> Someone who is merely happy to have been benefited by another might have no desire to reciprocate or otherwise express his joy *to* the benefactor. Such a person is easily construed as an ingrate, at least if he is aware of the benevolence from which his benefit proceeds. Alex would hardly count as grateful to Ben if, when presented with the opportunity to help Ben out of an innocent bind, Alex had no motivation to help Ben. A description of someone who is grateful must include his sense of *owing* thanks to his benefactor. A range of factors may prevent the grateful agent from *in fact* expressing thanks/reciprocating, but the person who feels grateful will at least be motivated to return the kindness previously shown him.

In many respects, gratitude is the symmetrical opposite of resentment, an angry attitude that represents another to have slighted (or harmed with ill will, or perhaps merely indifference) the resenter (see, e.g., Berger 1975; Roberts 2004). As with gratitude, one can count as resentful of (or "angry

with”) another for long stretches of time that include a wide range of (variously valenced) mental episodes. The contrast between gratitude and resentment is of particular importance, given that resentment is often thought to be a paradigmatic vehicle of interpersonal blame. Considered as Strawsonian “reactive attitudes,” resentment and gratitude are a “usefully opposed pair” (Strawson 1962: 77) in that resentment has the affective and motivational profile we associate with second-personal blame, while gratitude has the affective and motivational profile associated with second-personal praise (or “moral credit”). That is, these attitudes are paradigmatic ways of taking others to be responsible (i.e., blameworthy or praiseworthy). But while gratitude (along with admiration and pride) are often *mentioned* as paradigmatic praise-manifesting attitudes, the nature and norms of blame have thus far received the lion’s share of attention within the moral responsibility literature. Several of this volume’s chapters address the status of gratitude as a reactive attitude, shedding new light on the positive aspect of our responsibility practices.

### BEING A GRATEFUL PERSON: GRATITUDE QUA VIRTUE

The person who is stably disposed to develop dispositions to feel gratitude plausibly has the *trait* of gratitude. On the assumption that this trait can be, but is not necessarily, an excellence of character, the person who is stably disposed to develop dispositions to feel gratitude toward the right person, in the right circumstances, in the right way, and to the right degree plausibly possesses the *virtue* of gratitude.

Thinking of gratitude as a virtue brings into focus that gratitude involves more than experiencing an emotion. Intuitively, the grateful person not only takes joy in another’s having benevolently benefited him but also—on this basis—takes the other’s concerns as providing *reasons for action*. While one might count as having the emotion of gratitude even if one does not in fact *express* one’s gratitude, it is often thought to be essential to gratitude that one at least be *disposed* to express one’s gratitude, where this is a matter of treating the benefactor with goodwill. Sometimes we do this by saying “thank you,” but we often “show our thanks” through more heartfelt and personalized actions. The expression of gratitude is often referred to under the banner of “reciprocation,” though it should be distinguished from *repayment* that cancels a debt. Unlike repayment, the reciprocation involved in gratitude essentially involves sincerity. I can successfully repay a monetary debt (for example) regardless of the attitudes I have toward my creditor, but gratitude is partly constituted by the beneficiary’s *wanting* to make a return of kindness (at least in part) for its own sake. This return kindness has the character of an *expression* of one’s heart, and is often intended as a *communication* with the

benefactor. Though sometimes benefactors don't want such communication, and so the sensitive beneficiary may refrain from it (see Dickens's characters John Jarndyce and Esther Summerson, in Roberts, this volume). Plausibly then, to be disposed to have the emotion of gratitude *in the right way* involves being disposed to reciprocate, that is, to communicate to your benefactor, *out of goodwill*, what the benefit meant to you.

We emphasize the expressive component of gratitude here for the following reason. The person who is merely joyful about having been benevolently benefited is in many cases the paradigm of *ingratitude*. It is true that we sometimes call the person who is unhappy with her lot an "ingrate," but when we say this, we are saying not only that she ought to *appreciate* what she has been given but she also has a reason to express her gratitude to her benefactor. For, suppose that the ingrate in question comes to take joy in what she has been given, yet displays indifference to her parents, teachers, and friends (perhaps out of an undue sense of self-determination). This person may very well be happy about having been benevolently benefited, but if we continue to think of her as an exemplar of ingratitude, this is because she lacks the disposition to reciprocate sincerely. The grateful person, one who has the virtue of gratitude, is not only disposed to feel the emotion at the right times, toward the right persons, and in the right circumstances, but is also disposed to feel it *in the right way*. A proper account of the virtue of gratitude will fill in what it is to have these appropriate dispositions. For now, let's say the disposition to "feel gratitude in the right way" importantly includes the motive to reciprocate or express gratitude to the benefactor. This motivational/behavioral component of the virtuous agent's grateful response is sometimes considered in isolation. As such, its fulfillment is sometimes theorized as a debt or duty of gratitude.

## DEBTS OF GRATITUDE

It is widely held that being benevolently benefited can generate a debt of gratitude. How to understand "debts of gratitude," however, is a matter of much debate. These debts are often referred to as generating "obligations (or duties) of gratitude," but unlike standard obligations, those of gratitude do not seem to provide the benefactor with the *right* to demand or exact reciprocation from the beneficiary. One explanation of this is that gratitude is a response to generosity (see Chappell this volume and Roberts this volume; see also Seneca's *On Benefits*, where gratitude is tightly linked to generosity); for generosity is *free* giving, giving without requirement of return. To give generously and then turn around and demand repayment would be both inconsistent and boorish. And indeed, those who hold that "repayment of debts of gratitude is [. . .] an obligation (or moral requirement)" (McConnell

1993: Chapter 2; McConnell 2018) typically deny that the benefactor has a claim-right to the beneficiary's gratitude. What, then, does the idea "A has a duty of gratitude to B" come to? Should talk of duties/obligations/requirements here be understood in terms of *desert*, such that the beneficiary's "having a duty of gratitude" reduces to the benefactor's *deserving* the beneficiary's reciprocal return?

These notions of deserving and owing can be connected to the idea of a right, even if not a claim right. Tony Manela (2015: especially 163–166) invokes the notion of an *imperfect right* for these cases. Although the original benefactor does not have a claim right to demand that the beneficiary reciprocate, she does have standing to remonstrate and express resentment, and this sort of standing affirms her self-respect. (McConnell, this volume, endnote 7)

But it may strike us that even to remonstrate, complain, or resent the ungrateful beneficiary is a compromise with the spirit of generosity unless the remonstrator also occupies the role of moral educator (say, that of a parent) vis-à-vis the ungrateful one. But in that case, the complaint is not justified by the benefactor-beneficiary relationship, but by the parent-child or other educator-learner relationship. We might say that the debt of gratitude is properly felt primarily or even solely by the beneficiary, and that it is felt not as needing to be paid off, but as a lasting bond of love. This would be why Seneca warns us to be careful in selecting our benefactors:

I should be even more careful when seeking someone to be indebted to for a benefit than for money. The financial creditor only has to be paid back as much as I accepted, and once I pay him off then I am free and clear. But I have a larger payment to make to the other creditor, and even after the favor has been returned we are still linked to each other. For once I have paid him back I must start again, and a friendship persists. (*On Benefits*, 2.18.5)

On this Senecan proposal, the debt of gratitude is inextricable from the beneficiary's sense of owing reciprocation or thanks, which itself is a component of the joyful emotion of gratitude. This thought coheres with the idea that, whatever else they may be, debts of gratitude are not paradigmatically experienced by the beneficiary simply as *to-be-discharged*, but rather as opportunities to deepen the relation of interpersonal joy occasioned by the benefactor's original manifestation of goodwill.

## The Chapters

The volume's first chapter challenges the idea that gratitude is inherently an affective phenomenon. Hichem Naar advances a distinction between generic

and deep gratitude, where the former is a matter of merely *believing* that one has been benevolently benefited. Generic gratitude is neither affective nor does it motivate one to reciprocate. Naar's proposal is motivated in part by the peculiar features of introspecting our attitudes of gratitude. In contrast to our grasp of whom we love, our grasp of whom we are grateful to is often elusive. Naar argues that the elusiveness of self-attributions of gratitude is well explained by positing a form of ("generic") gratitude for which it is sufficient to be grateful that one have an evaluative belief with the right content, even if this belief remain largely dormant. Naar then discusses the possible grounds (or rather, the elusiveness of grounds) on which generic gratitude might appropriately become "deep gratitude," that is, gratitude that is inherently affective and motivational.

Terrance McConnell's chapter (chapter 2) focuses on a puzzle generated by cases in which an agent has sufficient reason to reciprocate gratefully ("to discharge a debt of gratitude"), but where it may nonetheless be morally desirable to act from reasons other than those of gratitude, especially those of love. When multiple values commend the same action, it is not always clear what the agent's salient motive should be, or alternatively and more specifically, whether one should benefit another qua original benefactor (i.e., from gratitude), or qua loved one. Complexity is added to the analysis by McConnell's treating love as possessed of moral content, such that the conflict between acting from love versus from gratitude is not simply a standoff between morality (understood as a burdensome source of motivation) and personal relationships.

Debts of gratitude are the focus of the next set of chapters. Adrienne Martin's chapter advances a solution to a puzzle concerning obligations of gratitude. While debts of gratitude seem to be instances of directed obligation—the beneficiary has a debt *to* the benefactor *for* being benefited—benefactors lack a claim-right to the beneficiary's gratitude. Unlike standard directed obligations, of which promissory obligations are paradigmatic, "obligations of gratitude" (if there are any) do not seem to give the benefactor the authority to *demand* the beneficiary's reciprocation. Martin proposes a novel way to anchor obligations of gratitude. On her proposal, the beneficiary has an obligation of gratitude that corresponds not to a claim-right, but to the benefactor's "personal expectation." While the agent with a claim-right (e.g., the promisee) has the standing to direct both the adoption of an end and the means to it, the benefactor has the authority to "direct the beneficiary only to adopt or maintain the broad end of being grateful." On Martin's view, the benefactor *does* have the standing to issue directives, including demands, but these are directives not to perform a particular action but a broad end, of being grateful. That is, the benefactor has the standing to direct that differs from the promisee's in *scope*. Martin contrasts her "scope strategy" with

strategies that identify the difference between the promisee and the benefactor in the *force* of the kind of directive they have the standing to issue.

Agnes Callard analyzes debts of gratitude in terms of the demand to come to value something. Callard argues that such debts come in two types: debts of reciprocation, and debts of appreciation, corresponding to two forms of gratitude: assistance gratitude versus mentor gratitude. Instances of assistance gratitude are those by which the benefactor's benevolence generates an obligation that governs how the beneficiary acts, thinks, and feels *toward the benefactor*. By contrast, mentor gratitude generates an obligation that governs how one acts, thinks, and feels about *the benefit*. Callard distinguishes both assistance gratitude and mentor gratitude from a further form of gratitude that does *not* generate a debt of gratitude, namely gratitude for gifts, at least when the gift satisfies the norms of gift-giving by treading the line between the overly useful and the useless. "The perfect gift is perfect precisely in that it elicits an affective response that exhausts all the demands of gratitude. It leaves no normative remainder to stand as a 'debt of gratitude.'"

Coleen Macnamara's chapter asks whether gratitude can be owed for rights-fulfilling conduct (i.e., for benefits that the benefactor has an obligation to give). The standard, but largely unargued for, view is that gratitude is *not* owed for rights-fulfilling conduct. After considering several baselines relative to which a beneficiary may count as being benefited, Macnamara provides an argument for the view that benefits constitutive of rights-fulfilling conduct do not generate debts of gratitude. She maintains that "requiring  $P_1$  to feel gratitude toward  $P_2$  amounts to morally forbidding her from representing herself as possessing what morality, itself, has deemed (in a sense to be specified) normatively *hers*." Macnamara allays worries about her proposal by discussing the ways in which gratitude may be fitting and of moral significance even when it is not *owed*.

Cameron Fenton presents a view of filial gratitude that sits between the view that gratitude is owed for basic parental care and the view that it is owed for supererogatory benefits. Fenton argues that "children owe their parents gratitude only when they meet their moral parental duties and raise their children well." In reply to the objection that a gratitude-based theory of gratitude cannot specify how filial obligations are to be discharged, Fenton outlines what it may be for children to provide their parents with "commensurate benefits" that respond to their parents' genuine needs. Lastly, Fenton appeals to data measuring unpaid childcare performed by fathers and mothers to argue that filial duties of gratitude are apt to be stronger toward mothers.

Gratitude considered as a Strawsonian reactive attitude is the focus of the next set of chapters. Stephen Darwall advances an account of gratitude as a "second-personal attitude of the heart." He contrasts attitudes of the heart (which also include trust and love) with the standard "juridical" reactive

attitudes (resentment, indignation, and guilt), which reflect interpersonal demands and through which we hold agents accountable for conduct. While juridical reactive attitudes are second-personal in virtue of addressing their targets with implicit demands, gratitude is a reciprocating attitude that communicates to the benefactor that the beneficiary welcomes the benefit and the benefactor's giving of it. In this way, gratitude, like other second-personal attitudes of the heart, involves "heartfelt giving and receiving."

In the next chapter, Justin Coates argues that gratitude and resentment are asymmetrical in at least three key ways: in their fittingness conditions, in the norms that govern their expression, and in their value for human relationships. First, Coates defends the view that there is an asymmetry in conditions under which agents deserve praise-manifesting and blame-manifesting attitudes, proposing that this is to be explained by a difference in the degree of moral *competence* required to deserve blame in contrast to praise. Next, Coates argues that the reasons to express blame-manifesting attitudes are more readily defeasible than the reasons to express praise-manifesting attitudes, like gratitude. Finally, he argues that there exists an asymmetry in the value of praise- and blame-manifesting attitudes, such that "a world with *n* instrumental goods and the good of being grateful to someone who genuinely deserves gratitude seems *better*—more worthy of actualization—than a world with *n* instrumental goods and the good of resenting someone who genuinely deserves resentment."

Bennett Helm's chapter focuses on gratitude's role within the broader rational network of reactive attitudes. According to Helm, this network of reactive attitudes is constitutive of a community of respect, the norms of which are sometimes made determinate through our very attitudes of gratitude and the like. He focuses on an example in which a student is grateful to her teacher for the teacher's correcting herself after first failing to use the student's preferred gender pronouns. On Helm's view, though it is not clear whether the teacher *benefits* the student, gratitude is responsive to benevolence, understood as one's being motivated by "recognition respect." On the assumption that there is indeterminacy in our gender recognition norms, the student's gratitude can be understood as further committing themselves to, and more determinately delineating, the norm, and inviting the teacher—as well as the community at large—to uphold the norm.

The next pair of chapters address the social neuroscience and social psychology of gratitude. Christina Karns provides a model for understanding how "neural systems may work together to support an experience of gratitude and how the plastic and changeable nature of the brain might be used to promote gratitude." She begins by offering a conceptual analysis of gratitude similar to what a philosopher might provide, but she uses it to generate hypotheses about the neural processes that underlie the experience of this

socially complex and morally implicated emotion. Her assumption is that in such conditions as that the grateful person feels joyful rather than guilty about receiving the benefit from the benefactor and that she feels begraced by, rather than entitled to, the benefit correspond to distinguishable neural and biological processes that can be empirically identified. And she suggests that an understanding of these physiological processes might be useful for helping people to grow in gratitude.

Jack Bauer and Colin Shanahan offer a developmental account of gratitude rooted in a narrational understanding of self identity. According to their account, the traits of existential authenticity and gratitude interact reciprocally over the decades of the lifespan in such a way that individuals become increasingly appreciative of the depth of their interdependency with others. Furthermore, their sense of what it means to “be oneself” evolves from merely not putting on a false façade socially to an incorporation of ethical values that determine the core of being human as their moral tradition construes them. Young people can be grateful, but their gratitude is largely behavioral, consisting in the disposition to “recognize” others’ contributions by *expressing* gratitude. But as their narrative self-awareness extends and complexifies and ethically deepens over time, they come both to feel and to understand how interlaced their lives and their identities are with those of others, thus rendering their gratitude deeper and more genuine.

The final set of chapters addresses a range of questions concerning gratitude as a virtue and the various ways of manifesting the vice of ingratitude. Sophie Grace Chappell proposes that virtues be divided into those primarily oriented toward good/right action, and those oriented toward good/right feeling. She argues that gratitude should be understood as belonging to the latter class. After providing a self-standing analysis of gratitude, on which gratitude is understood as responsive to *generosity*, Chappell challenges the standard view that gratitude is not among the Aristotelian virtues. She argues that Aristotle’s treatment of gratitude must be understood against the background of Athenian client-patron relations, and that a more positive Aristotelian stance on gratitude, between equals, can be extracted from Aristotle’s discussion of friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, read alongside his discussion of gratitude between unequals in the *Rhetoric*. Chappell concludes by making a case for the appropriateness that we, like St. Paul, “give thanks in every circumstance,” and so makes a case for “cosmic gratitude,” or at least the intelligibility of a mind-set of cosmic gratitude.

Drawing on an example from Graham Greene’s novel *Brighton Rock*, David Carr addresses the question whether gratitude is a virtuous response to “benefits” that turn on some kind of deceit. The well-meaning person who lies to her friend for the latter’s benefit may strike us as both belittlingly dishonest or as compassionate. To help with the analysis of gratitude for

“benefits” based on lies, Carr proposes that we distinguish talk of virtue from talk of morality. On this basis, he argues that we can understand the deceitful friend as a proper object of gratitude (though perhaps not unambivalent gratitude) insofar as she has the other’s interests in mind, even if these are not *moral* interests.

Liz Gulliford provides conceptual grounds and evidence for thinking that gratitude belongs to a mutually reinforcing set of benevolent virtues, that is, an “allocentric quintet” comprised of generosity, gratitude, forgiveness, compassion, and humility (Gulliford and Roberts 2018). Focusing in particular on the exercises making up Twelve Step programs and the practice of *lojong* (from the Tibetan Buddhist tradition), Gulliford’s chapter outlines how spiritual and self-examination practices promote cross-pollination from one allocentric virtue to another within a person’s character. Gulliford concludes with “some suggestions as to how psychological interventions to promote strengths of character might be enriched by fostering mutually reinforcing strengths, rather than targeting virtues individually.”

Tony Manela’s chapter focuses on the various ways in which one can fall short (or long) of the virtue of gratitude. After providing an account of the virtue of gratitude as a “meta-disposition” or the “disposition to perceive benevolence and to form the proper grateful beliefs and affective and behavioral dispositions vis-à-vis the source of that benevolence,” Manela provides a taxonomy of the ways one can fail to be a grateful agent. According to Manela, there are three ways an agent can fail to be properly grateful: he can fail to be properly sensitive to evidence of benevolence (failures of attunement); he can fail to establish the proper beliefs and dispositions when gratitude is called for (failures of establishment); and he can fail to preserve those beliefs and dispositions for a proper or reasonable amount of time (failures of duration).

In the volume’s final chapter, Robert Roberts explores the emotional depth of Charles Dickens’s *Bleak House* to illustrate how gratitude must be understood in its connection with other virtues, especially generosity, but also humility, justice (injustice), friendship, and practical wisdom. By attending to the characters of John Jarndyce, Esther Summerson, and Harold Skimpole, Roberts maintains that it is only in combination with the concept of justice that the notions of generosity (in contrast to liberality, which construes gratitude as servile) and gratitude are intelligible. The generosity-gratitude dynamic is especially central to Roberts’s contribution as he, following Dickens, identifies these as complementary virtues: gratitude is a proper or canonical response to genuine acts and attitudes of generosity and such generosity is satisfied and completed, so to speak, by expressions of gratitude. Roberts proposes that we call this pair the *virtues of grace*, since both are about gifts—giving and gracious receiving.

## NOTES

1 Although, to say that “gratitude an essentially pleasant emotion . . . is fully compatible with someone’s finding the *idea* of gratitude unpleasant” (Roberts 2015: 888).

2 At least where the benevolent attitudes are weighty enough to motivate action, as benevolent intentions are, though benevolent but idle or fleeting desires, say, are not. That is, even if it’s the “thought that counts,” it is not clear that we ought to be grateful to the person who merely *desires* (even for our own sake) that another would help us, when the desirer is in a position to help us himself with little effort.

3 For simplicity’s sake, we do not distinguish here between (1) seeing (being disposed to see) the benefactor’s interests and circumstances as providing reasons for (beneficent) action and (2) being motivated to act beneficently, toward one’s benefactor.

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